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Programme performance report of the United Nations for the biennium 2008-2009

Report of the Secretary-General

Corrigendum

After paragraph 654 insert the following paragraphs and renumber the subsequent paragraphs accordingly:

Subprogramme 3
Economic development and integration

(a) Increased knowledge among stakeholders in the region of the issues that should be taken into account in designing and implementing suitable macroeconomic policies and strategies for sustainable economic growth, employment creation and poverty alleviation in line with the Millennium Development Goals

655. Two documents submitted to ESCWA at its twenty-fifth session, in May 2008 (E/ESCWA/25/4(Part II)/A and B, on strengthening regional cooperation for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and achievements and progress made in attaining the Millennium Development Goals in the Arab countries: challenges and policies) facilitated substantive discussions on the necessary future actions for the achievement of the Goals. ESCWA contributed to the publication *World Economic Situation and Prospects* in 2009 and 2010. The 2009 issue received intensive media attention for the analysis of the global financial crisis and its impact. The regional economic forecasts of December 2008 and November 2009 focused on assessing the impact of the global financial crisis and food inflation. The survey of economic and social developments in the ESCWA region, 2007-2008 (E/ESCWA/EDGD/2008/3), called for policy measures in the light of the rights-based development strategies reflecting the increasing fluctuations of regional capital flows.

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(b) Enhanced capacity of the member countries to negotiate and implement subregional, regional and multilateral trade and investment agreements designed to promote interregional and intraregional trade and investment flows

656. As at January 2009, one country (the Syrian Arab Republic) issued a new law to promote trade liberalization. Four national training workshops (two in Egypt and two in Oman) contributed to upgrading the negotiation skills of 90 Government officials on bilateral investment agreements and double taxation avoidance. ESCWA assisted the Syrian Arab Republic in developing a database on foreign direct investment statistics. The target of three countries accepting and/or adopting trade negotiation proposals and facilitation schemes or measures was reached. The target of four countries negotiating and implementing trade agreements designed to promote interregional and intraregional trade flows with ESCWA support was also reached. The target of 11 countries integrating the Monterrey Consensus into their economic strategies and policies was reached.

(c) Strengthened capacity of member countries to formulate and implement policies and programmes for improving transport infrastructure and logistics within the framework of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq

657. ESCWA continued to support and follow up with member countries on the implementation of the ESCWA transport agreements. The number of countries that adopted the road agreement increased to 12. Those that acceded to the railways agreement increased to 9 and those that acceded to the memorandum of understanding rose to 10. The percentage of length of the road network that met the requirements of the international roads agreement rose from 50 per cent at the end of 2007 to 55 per cent in December 2008. The policy measures adopted by member countries in relation to the implementation of the Integrated Transport System in the Arab Mashreq increased to 40 (31 treaties and 9 National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committees) in 2009 compared with 31 (24 treaties and 7 National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committees) in 2007.

(d) Greater participation in the multilateral trading system

658. ESCWA assessed trade policy trends in member countries, trade facilitation, services liberalization measures and accession processes, and provided related policy advocacy and advice. The target to have 10 rules, regulations and policies in conformity with World Trade Organization rules and regulations was met. ESCWA assessed trade policy options in the member countries, their implications on trade and economic performance and future prospects to improve trade performance in the region. In addition, ESCWA provided a forum for the Arab business community to brief them on the latest developments concerning the World Trade Organization negotiations and discuss their respective implications and issues of concern in the light of the world economic crisis. The Forum is the third in a series, and the demand for it demonstrates its success.

(e) Increased facilitation of transboundary flows of goods, services, persons and capital among member countries

659. The Transport Committee plays a vital role in enhancing harmonization and in facilitating agreements on subregional/regional cooperation. Key developments in this area are: the unified convention on multimodal transport among the Arab

countries, prepared jointly by ESCWA and the League of Arab States; the adoption of the Arab Railways Network based on the Agreement on International Railways in the Arab Mashreq by using the same numbering and classification of railway routes, the Economic and Social Arab Summit (Kuwait, January 2009) and cooperation between ESCWA and the League of Arab States to prepare the terms of reference of the Arab Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee (August 2009). In 2008, Iraq took positive steps in establishing a National Transport and Trade Facilitation Committee.

Subprogramme 4
Information and communication technology for regional integration

(a) Increased implementation of the Regional Plan of Action for Building the Information Society, particularly in relation to the information and communication technology sector

660. ESCWA monitored progress of the information society of the member countries and provided indicators for its measurement. The Expert Group Meeting on Developing the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector in the ESCWA region highlighted obstacles in the development of a self-reliant and sustainable ICT sector and solutions to overcome them in order to build a flourishing regional ICT sector. The outcomes of the regional conference, a follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society, were the Regional Programme of Action and the Arab ICT Strategy; a road map for the implementation and follow-up of future activities related to the World Summit on the Information Society; and the creation of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development Arab Region Network.

(b) Enhanced capacity of member countries to provide e-services in Arabic targeting socio-economic development

661. Within the project entitled "Development of an Arabic domain names system", the published draft was refined and posted on the Internet Engineering Task Force website under the title "Linguistic guidelines for the use of Arabic characters in Internet domains". ESCWA defined a template for cyberlegislation that will assist ESCWA member countries in the assessment and development of cyberlegislation at the national level. ESCWA partnered with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in Iraq in implementing the project on ICT for education in Iraq, which is expected to increase the ICT literacy of teachers and staff and establish several learning centres throughout the country. The study on building trust in e-services stressed the importance of cybersecurity to ensure the protection of data and privacy.

Subprogramme 5
Statistics for evidence-based policymaking

(a) Strengthened capacity of member countries to improve the national institutional framework for official statistics

662. ESCWA member countries reached a 67 per cent rate of implementation of the fundamental principles of official statistics. This is attributable mainly to the work of ESCWA, such as advocacy for the application of the principles, the establishment of a virtual library on national statistical systems, the sharing of information on best practices, the dissemination of guidelines and the provision of technical support for

building the capacity of national statistical offices, as well as the forum of the Statistical Committee. The subprogramme increased the capacity of concerned officials in the areas of revisions and classifications of international standards in economic and social statistics. This was done particularly in two areas: (a) the update of statistical systems for national accounts according to the latest international recommendations; and (b) the revised 2008 System of National Accounts according to each country's needs, including the measurement of informal sector activities.

(b) Strengthened capacity of member countries to participate effectively in the 2010 round of population censuses, household surveys and other surveys as a statistical requisite for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015

663. The following members of ESCWA have completed the 2010 round of population and housing censuses: Jordan (2005), the United Arab Emirates (2005), Kuwait (2005), Egypt (2006), Palestine (2007) and the Sudan (2008). On average, six countries in the region provided ESCWA with at least 60 per cent of the information needed for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, including gender-disaggregated figures. ESCWA, as the secretariat of the regional task force on population and housing censuses, organized a meeting in March 2009 that focused on census media, planning census in a governorate, metadata and good practices and reviewed the Arabic translation of *Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses*. The virtual library has been updated to serve as knowledge base for sharing information and providing users with resourceful tools on five thematic areas (namely, population and housing censuses, the Millennium Development Goals, gender, health and national statistical systems).

Subprogramme 6
Advancement of women

(a) Strengthened capacity of national mechanisms and civil society institutions for the empowerment and advancement of women to address gender imbalances and mainstream a gender perspective, with special emphasis on the participation of women in legislative and executive authorities

664. ESCWA advocacy contributed to the inclusion of a gender perspective in the 2008 national plan of Saudi Arabia. ESCWA provided advisory services to Saudi Arabia, among other countries, on how to mainstream a gender perspective in national policies and programmes, thus, complementing the Commission's normative and analytical work. Furthermore, training on a broad spectrum of gender issues, such as gender budgeting, gender mainstreaming, implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, resolutions and their gender-sensitive implementation, gender in politics, lobbying and elections, and violence against women, contributed to building national capacity in those areas. ESCWA also contributed to the timely submission of reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women by Bahrain and Saudi Arabia, an important tool for monitoring progress on women's issues. The submission of the report by Bahrain can be directly linked to ESCWA advisory services.

Subprogramme 7
Conflict mitigation and development

(a) Increased understanding by member countries of the impact of conflict on socio-economic development in the region

665. ESCWA promoted the concept of development under crisis and explored the potential for private sector resilience in countries affected by conflict. ESCWA activities contributed to raising awareness of the important role that the private sector could play in conflict mitigation and development, building on regional experiences. Six public and civic entities provided positive feedback concerning the usefulness of the topics discussed. The subprogramme laid the foundation for a regional response to mitigate the impact of conflict as well as other pressing global challenges. This was translated into increasing interest and support among member countries on the creation of an intergovernmental committee on emerging issues and development under crisis. Out of 14 member countries, 11 joined the task force, reflecting on the positive impact of ESCWA in promoting increased understanding and pre-emptive and responsive capacities of member countries.

(b) Enhanced capacity of member countries to identify, assess, predict and respond to socio-economic and political issues and challenges posed by conflict and instability in the region

666. Tailored techniques for management and emergency preparedness in Iraq were implemented through building the capacity of 89 Iraqi officials (including 21 women). A training module and an e-caravan were used to train 730 residents (including 392 women) of post-conflict areas of southern Lebanon to improve their employment prospects. On 30 June 2009, the subprogramme recorded 15 requests for technical assistance from member countries. Reflecting upon the success of the subprogramme's accomplishments in terms of implementing capacity-building modules and enhancing the capacity of member States to assess and respond to socio-economic and political challenges posed by conflict and instability in the region, ESCWA conducted 15 workshops involving 113 youth; a total of 51 workshops were implemented, benefiting a total of 484 participants, of which 230 were women.